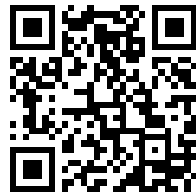
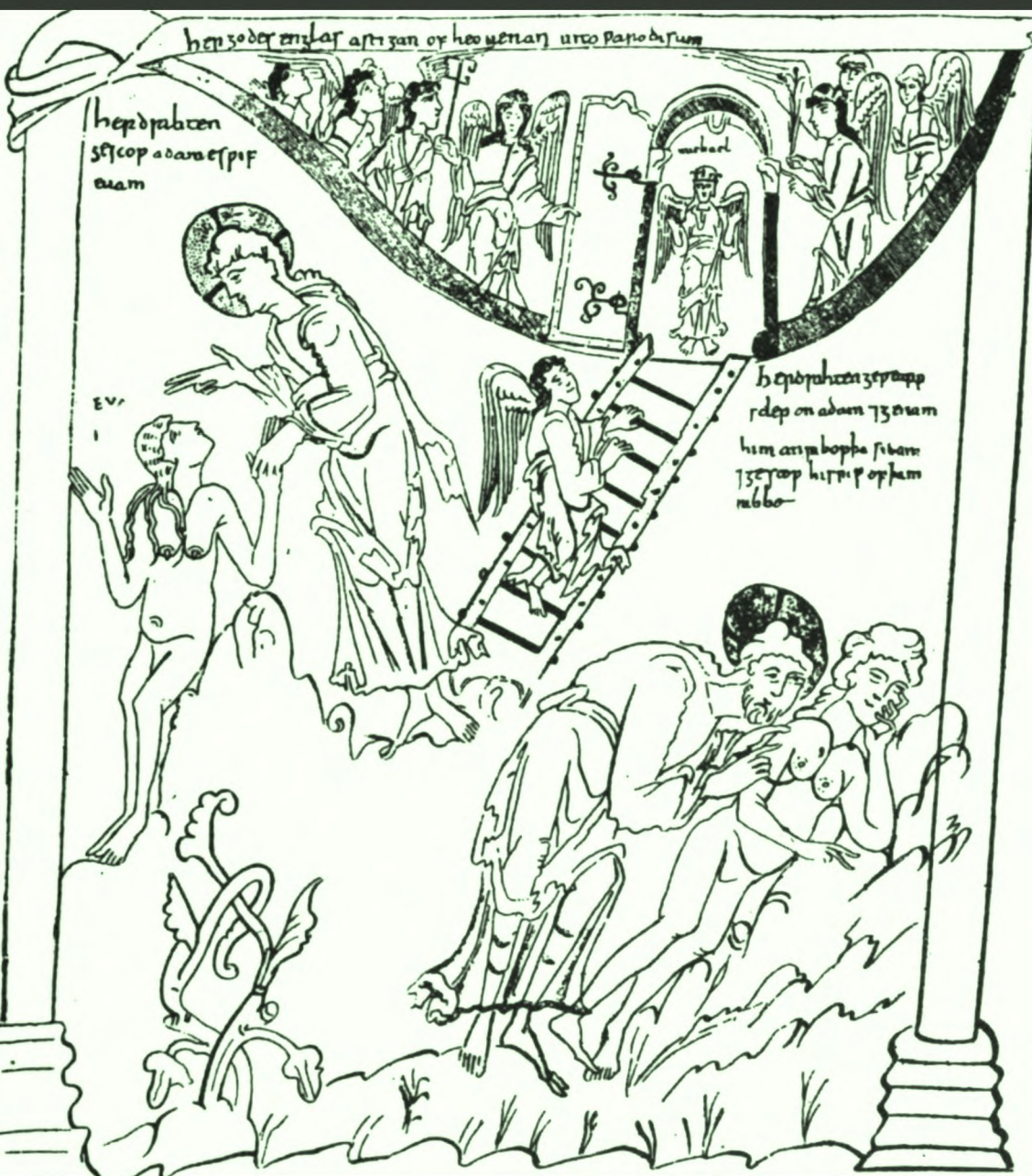

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Caedmon

Robert Tate Gaskin, Caedmon

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CÆDMON

THE FIRST ENGLISH POET.

BY

ROBERT TATE GASKIN

"And his song and his verse were so winsome to hear that his teachers themselves wrote and learned from his mouth."—BEDE.

THIRD EDITION—REVISED

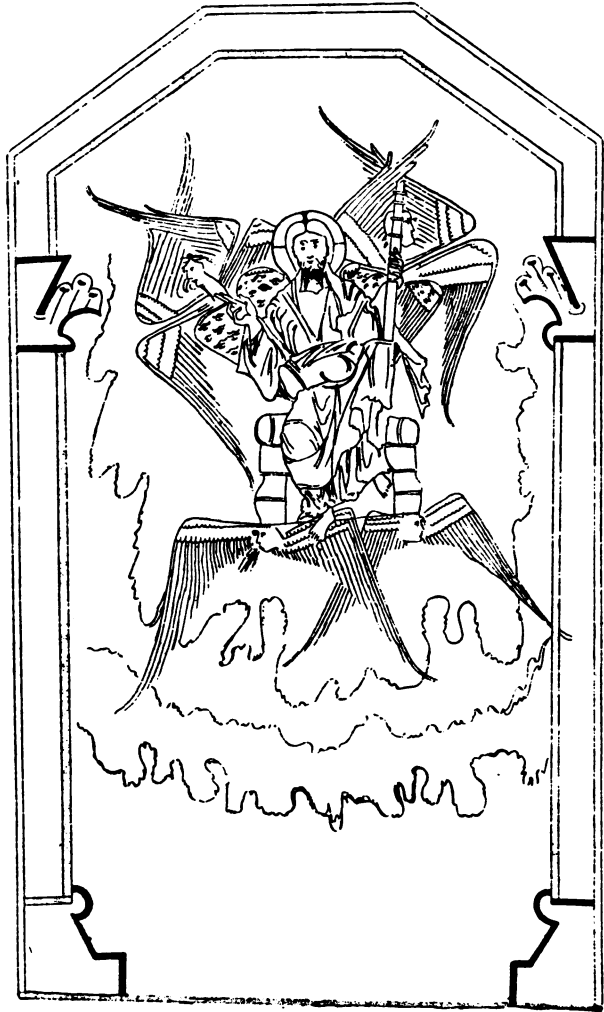
PUBLISHED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE GENERAL
LITERATURE COMMITTEE

LONDON:
1902

CÆDMON

THE FIRST ENGLISH POET

Genesius in anglico



Frontispiece of the Manuscript of Chaucer's Paraphrase

[Frontispiece.]

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LONDON:
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THIS is a very humble attempt to place before the reader in a popular form some of the earliest writings of our race. The beginnings of the English language and literature have long been the subject of growing interest ; it is now not difficult to learn the story of the homely bard who, when this little book was first published, was to the general public almost an unknown character. The writer has no thought of entering into competition with the scholarly works of learned authorities ; he simply offers in a concise form a view of the subjects that engaged the mind and the muse of Cædmon and his disciples. In this effort he has had the good fortune to gain the approval of men who speak and write with the authority which research and learning give.

Whitby, 1902.

We are indebted to the proprietors of 'Horne's Guide to Whitby' for their courtesy in allowing us to use the blocks of the local crosses.

CÆDMON, THE POET

OUR forefathers really believed that at times heaven speaks to earth "in visions of the night when deep sleep falleth upon men"; they did not doubt that the saintly Hild's mother was advised in a dream of the coming birth of a distinguished personage; or that Cædmon, the earliest English poet, was divinely inspired to sing of the Creation. This is the story told by Bede as we may understand it.

Whilst the monastery at Streonshalh was ruled by Hild, there was amongst the men employed upon the land one named Cædmon, sprung as some have thought from the older British race, who had within him an undiscovered gift of song—a gift of which he was himself unconscious, and one that only some great emotion could call into action. The things that pleased his fellows did not interest him; the songs of the evening "gebeorscip" brought for him no inspiration; when in turn the harp came round to him he must let it pass untouched.

In this state of mind on one occasion he left his companions at the "gebeorscip" and went to his place with the cattle. There he fell into sleep and this is what Bede says took place: "Then stood one before him in a dream, greeting him and saying, 'Hail, Cædmon, sing me something.' Then he answered and said, 'I cannot sing; for

that cause have I left the gebeorscip and come hither.' He who was speaking with him said again, 'Yet must thou sing to me.' Then said Cædmon, 'What must I sing?' And he quoth, 'Sing of the beginning of things.' When he received this answer began he forthwith to sing in praise of God the Creator, the verses and the words which he had never heard, the sense of which is this :—

" 'Now must we praise the Lord ; of heaven's kingdom the Warden ; the might of the Creator and His mind's thought ; the glorious Father of man. He, the Lord of all, shaped first for the children of men, the heavens for roof, and middle earth. The Holy Creator, mankind's Warden ; the earth for men made the Lord Almighty.'

" This is the sense but not the order of the words which, while sleeping, he had sung ; neither can those hymns, be they ever so well composed, be translated into another tongue without suffering in their dignity and harmony.¹

" Awake, he remembered all that sleeping he had sung, and straightway to those words added many more of song in the same measure to the glory of God. Then came he in the morning to the town-reeve, who was his master, and told him what gift he had received. He thereupon led him to the abbeſs, who bade all the most learned men and their learners to come together, and desired him in their preſence to tell the dream and ſing the ſong, that by the judgment of them all it might be known why or whence this gift was come. And it ſeemed to them all that it was from the Lord Himſelf that the gift had come. Then they told to him ſome holy hiſtory and words of godly lore, and bade him if he could to turn them into the melody of ſong and ſing them. When he had undertaken this, he went to his own houſe, and coming again in the morning, he ſang to them

¹ Bede's writings are in Latin.

that which had been told him, and that adorned with the best poetry. Then began the abbess to make much of and love the grace of God in the man, instructing and exhorting him to forsake worldly and betake himself to religious life, to which he cheerfully agreed. And she received him into the minster with his goods, and joined him with the congregation of those servants of God, and caused him to be taught the books of holy history and of the Gospel. And he, all that he could learn by hearing, meditated, and as a clean animal ruminating, turned into the sweetest verse, and his song and his verse were so winsome to hear that his teachers themselves wrote and learned from his mouth.

“He first sung of earth’s creation and of the origin of mankind, and all the history of Genesis, which is the first book of Moses ; then of the departure of the people of Israel from the Egyptians’ land, and of the entrance into the land of promise, also of many other histories of holy Writ ; of Christ’s incarnation and of His passion and ascension into heaven ; of the coming of the Holy Ghost, and of the Apostles’ doctrine ; of the terror of the doom to come and the fear of hell-torment, and of the sweetness of the heavenly kingdom he made many poems. And in like manner many others of the Divine benefits and judgments he made ; in all of which he sought earnestly to draw men from the love of sins and wicked works and to excite within them a love and desire of good deeds. For he was a very pious man, and to regular discipline humbly subjected, but against all who would act otherwise he was warmly opposed.”

The only known manuscript of the paraphrase attributed to Cædmon is preserved in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. It cannot be traced further back than to Archbishop Usher, who gave it to a celebrated scholar of the time, Francis Junius. Junius bequeathed it to the Bodleian Library. It

bears neither name nor date, but there is no doubt as to a portion at least of it being the work of the poet referred to by Bede.

Ellis describes the MS. as follows :—" It is a small folio, on vellum, containing two hundred and twenty-nine pages ; the first two hundred and twelve are written in a fair uniform hand, the remainder of the volume in a writing somewhat different, if not inferior, in its character, so much so as to have led some persons—and even Mr. Thorpe himself—to ascribe the close of the MS. to a later period than the rest ; the balance of opinion among competent judges leads to a belief that the whole must have been written about, or soon after, the year 1000."

Thorpe says that "the text of the MS. is in numerous instances so corrupt as to admit only of conjectural interpretation, and some few places have, I regret to say, baffled all my efforts even at conjecture. In the earlier part of the poem these inaccuracies are less frequent, and the sense continues unbroken, except in places where the MS. exhibits evident vestiges of mutilation ; but as we advance, errors and omissions thicken upon us, till at length, in the second book, we find little else than a series of unconnected fragments."

Thorpe further remarks in a foot-note that the most correct part of the MS. was probably written from a copy, and the least correct from dictation, and the "errors are such as an illiterate man, writing from a recitation, might naturally be expected to commit" ; and these fragments are written connectedly, as entire parts of the poem, as if the scribe had not perceived their broken character.

The poem is divided into two very unequal parts, the first book containing two hundred and twelve pages, while the second has only seventeen pages ; and the second book,

Thorpe says, "being less pure in spelling and less grammatical in language, is probably less ancient."¹

The manuscript is extensively decorated and illustrated, there being not less than fifty sketches ; "but," says Ellis, "the drawings do not reach beyond the ninety-sixth page ; in almost every subsequent page, to the very end of the volume, blank spaces, intended to receive illustrations, occur, shewing that in its decorations, as well as in its text, the MS. was left unfinished, probably owing to the death of the original scribe."

In a collection of Saxon poetry, known as the Exeter Manuscript, there is found an extract from Cædmon, the portion being 'The Song of Azariah,' one of the three Hebrew Children ; and this Thorpe considers to have been taken from a more perfect copy of Cædmon than the one now at Oxford.

It has been thought by some that the short extract given in King Alfred's Saxon version of Bede's history is the only genuine portion of Cædmon remaining. Dr. Hicks, a learned man at the close of the seventeenth century, was of this opinion, his assigned reason being that Alfred's fragment was not in the same words as the MS. (forgetting that Bede wrote them in Latin, which Alfred translated into Saxon), and that, from the many Dano-Saxon phrases in it, it must have been the production of some "Northumbrian after the Danes had corrupted the language." Thorpe combats this view, denying the existence of these Danisms, and declaring that he has not been able to trace a single instance of them ; "in fact," he says, "from beginning to end it is written (with the exception of some orthographical peculiarities in the second book) in Saxon, as pure as the works

¹ Although the locality in which it was written would greatly decide its character and age.

of Alfred himself ;” and, notwithstanding what many learned men have said, he sees no good foundation for doubt that the work is “the production of the good monk of Whitby” ; yet he concedes the presence of “interpolations, omissions, and corruptions, which in common with all ancient MSS. it may have suffered at the hands of ignorant transcribers.”

Cædmon’s poems were first published at Amsterdam, in 1665, by Junius, the learned man to whom Archbishop Usher had given the MS. In the middle of the eighteenth century there was much talk about reprinting it with the illuminations, and the scheme progressed as far as the completion of some engravings, but the matter was not carried to a successful issue. In 1831, the Society of Antiquaries resolved to publish an edition, with the Anglo-Saxon and an English translation in parallel columns. This work was entrusted to Benjamin Thorpe and it was issued in 1832. Already the same Society had published the illuminations from engravings by Basire. This was the first appearance of the entire poem in modern English. In 1849, Dr. Bouterwick published an edition of the original text in Germany ; and of later years, both in England and America, much attention has been devoted to the subject.

There is no certainty as to how much of the genuine verse of Cædmon has come down to us ; Professor Skeat thinks very little. There are some lines in a manuscript of Bede’s ‘Ecclesiastical History’ written in a hand believed to be as old as the days of Bede himself which are accepted by scholars as the veritable work of the monk of Streonshalh. They are found on the sixth page of the Anglo-Saxon paraphrase published by Junius, and may be taken as evidence of authorship as to a portion of that work. The following letters, written in connection with the Cædmon

Memorial, will throw as much light on the subject as we are ever likely to see. Professor Skeat writes—"I have read the account of the meeting of the Whitby Literary and Philosophical Society with great interest. It is a good sign that the great English nation is at last beginning to wake up to a sense of the fact that our noble literature began long before the days of Shakespeare and Chaucer. With the sole exception of Mæso-Gothic, the Anglo-Saxon MSS. are the oldest and best of all those produced by any Teutonic race. And when it is remembered that the Gothic fragments only contain portions of a translation of the Bible, our Anglo-Saxon poems remain as the oldest documents in existence as specimens of a native Teutonic literature. Not only are they the oldest, but they are the best. At least three authors are supremely first, two whose names we know, viz. Cædmon and Cynewulf, and one whose name we do not know, viz. the author of 'Beowulf.' I strongly recommend those who wish to inform themselves on this subject just to read the little book on Anglo-Saxon Literature by Professor Earle, published in a cheap form by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. I am well aware that Whitby is quite remarkable among English towns for its possession of a really good library, in which real literature is properly represented. So that it will not be difficult for such as wish to do so to obtain full information on the subject. All scholars accept the statements of Bede as to the existence of Cædmon and his excellence as an author. More than that, there are the famous nine lines, in the old Northumbrian dialect, which have come down to us in the very form in which Cædmon composed them. These are given at p. 101 of Professor Earle's book. As to the poems usually attributed to him, there is admittedly some doubt. But it is generally believed that these later versions represent what he

wrote with more or less fidelity. There are really *two* such versions, frequently distinguished by the letters A and B. Of these A is a ninth-century poem in Anglo-Saxon or Southern English, which may very well be a fair reproduction of the seventh-century poem by Cædmon originally written in the Northern dialect. The other version, version B, written a little later, is certainly only an Anglo-Saxon translation of a poem originally written in the Old Saxon (Westphalian) dialect by the author of another poem known as the 'Heliand.' This was originally only a conjecture made by Lievers, but it is now a certainty; for a portion of the Old Saxon original has lately been found in a MS. in the Vatican. But the Old Saxon version may also very well represent something of Cædmon's original, though probably with less exactness. There needs no more to be said. Beyond question, Cædmon, the poet, sang at Whitby, and composed one of the earliest poems ever made in any Teutonic language. Of this poem we actually possess nine lines; and even these are quite enough to shew us that he possessed great capabilities, and understood the poetical art. I append a few notes. In the form *Cædmon*, *Cæd* is pronounced just like the London pronunciation of *cad*. It rhymes with *glad*, as *glad* is pronounced in London and Oxford and Cambridge: not with *glad* as pronounced in Yorkshire. I see no reason for supposing that *Cæd* is Celtic: for *mon*, i.e. *man*, is very plain English. The name, slightly varied to *Cadmon*, appears in a Bucks charter, about A.D. 948, as printed in Birch, 'Cartularium Saxonicum,' vol. ii. p. 39. *Hilda* is a false spelling, due to the monkish habit of Latinising all names. Her real *English* name was *Hild*, and is the same as the Anglo-Saxon word *hild*, meaning 'battle.' Bede spells her name correctly, so does the Old-English translation of Bede. But all later books (as

a rule) add the stupid *a*, to tell us that the name was feminine! Why of course it was! Similarly, the Old High German (Frankish) name *Mahthild* is now spelt *Matilda*! *Maht-hild* means 'might-battle.' *Matilda* has no sense at all. I wish the spelling of Hild could receive recognition."

Professor Earle says—"The personality of Cædmon may seem to be veiled and mystified by the glorious halo which was breathed around him out of the awakened admiration of his contemporaries; and the beautiful record in Bede's 'Church History,' iv. 24, may sound too like a fairy legend to be received by moderns as genuine history. But it certainly is a very true and real personal history, though it may not be a perfectly scientific history, because it is enriched and enhanced by qualities too fine for scientific manipulation, namely, human imagination kindled by divine love into a generous ecstasy of admiration for a heaven-sent poet. That Cædmon lived, was a cowherd, that in advanced life he was seized with a poetical passion, and that this fervour was kindled by the high and wonderful glimpses of divine power, wisdom and goodness with which Scripture had surprised and awakened his mind—that he was led to the great abbess in the manner described, and by her introduced into the circle of her learned divines, and that they saw in him a marvellous work of heavenly grace, and decided his vocation for the remainder of his life, which was to set forth the great facts of sacred history in such a poetic form as would give them access to simple minds—this I hold to be undoubted matter of history. And I have also no doubt that the mortal frame of Cædmon lies in or near that ruined abbey which faces you on the opposite hill, the first English poet of whom we have any record. We have, in a very early handwriting (preserved in the University Library of Cambridge), what claims to be a few lines of his actual poetry,

and the claim, though canvassed by modern criticism, is by no means rejected ; but as to the large collection of very ancient poems now passing under his name, I would say, in the words of Mr. Plummer, that they may well 'be due to the impulse which he first gave, and be the work of disciples, like those who, as Bede testifies, imitated, without attaining, the master's skill.' This is from Plummer's '*Bede*,' vol. ii. p. 254 ; a book in which the best information is to be found, and which, if you have a public library at Whitby, ought to be on the shelves."

Cædmon's poems, like others in the Anglo-Saxon language, are distinguished by alliteration. In this style the initial letters of either one or more principal words in two consecutive lines agree, as follows :—

Tha com ofer foldan,	Then came over earth,
Fus sithian,	Swiftly journeying,
Maere mergen thridda.	The third great morn.
Næron metode tha gyt	Were not meted yet
Wid lond ne wegas nytte.	Wide land nor useful ways.

Literal translations, at all times unsatisfactory, are especially so from a simple style like this into our more polished tongue. With all humility, therefore, we present a few portions in modern metre, taking Thorpe's translation for our guide, with connected readings so arranged as to proceed in regular order.

BOOK I.

CANTO I.

It is very right that in our minds we love ; with our words we laud the Warden of the Skies—the Glory-King of Hosts. Of all creatures He is head ; to Him was never

beginning ; to Him no end cometh ; far and wide with glory and majesty He justly ruleth the concave heavens with all their host.

The angels, His bright ministers, adored their life's Lord and were happy. Sin they knew not and nought desired but truth and right until that angel proud beguiled them from the love of God. High words he spake that in the northern part of heaven's kingdom he would a throne possess.

Then was God angry ; on that host He frowned,
Whom erst with beauty He had nobly crowned :
A place He formed where these false ones might dwell,
Anguish their guerdon, and the groans of hell,
This torture-house awaits the proud exiles—
Hard punishment for them, where no joy smiles.
Eternal night haunts all its depths immense,
Red flames and sulphurous fumes, yet cold intense ;
And when our Lord the spirits' warden saw,
This house well formed to vindicate His law,
He bade that through the cheerless place should spread,
Of its dark woes, an ever-waxing dread.

The fallen host, thus confounded, spake bitter words against God, threatening by war to recover their lost glory, and to seize the empire ; but the King of heaven lifted His hands, and their courage melted :—

When in His rage, the mighty One arose,
He bent the pride of His rebellious foes ;
The sin-scathed beings of triumph He bereft,
And them without or sway or glory left.
Stern in His mood, in His own power He stands,
And in His wrath holds them with mighty hands ;
Then in His crushing grasp in pieces broke—
Such is their fate who dare their God provoke.

The Creator, still angry with His adversaries, deprives them of their bright abodes, and sends the haughty race of fallen angels on a long and sorrowful journey :—

Shattered their vaunts, their haughty threats brought low,
 Their glory dimmed, to drear exile they go;
 No joyous laugh breaks loudly forth to tell
 Of heartfelt joy; in hell accursed they dwell:
 Of pain and sorrow, now the woe they know,
 Tormenting waves of darkness o'er them flow;
 This, this, the meed of their rebellious sin,
 Since they had thought the throne of God to win,
 Then, as before, when these base wars did cease,
 In heaven's high courts 'midst all the bless'd was peace;
 The glories waxed, and the Eternal Lord
 Was by His faithful ministers adored.

CANTO II.

Records the design of the Almighty to form another race,
 who may occupy the places forfeited by the rebel angels,
 and begins an account of the Creation:—

Now, when the hostile bands had heaven resigned,
 For realms of darkness, where no peace they find,
 Great joy there spreads along the heavenly plains,
 Nor fear, nor hate, nor strife, but concord reigns.
 Meanwhile, the evil sprites do wretched moan,
 Deep in perdition's dungeons left to groan;
 Far, far, behind they leave their bright abode,
 That realm of God, all fair and fruitful stood:
 Yet these bless'd mansions, dowered by God's own hand,
 Of their first dwellers void, do empty stand.

Then the Lord pondered how He might replace the
 heavens with a better race, since these braggart rebels had
 been driven forth. He, therefore, planted the earth with
 firmament above, and wide waters round it:—

Rude and unshapen was the rocky ground,
 Thick darkness shaded all the vast profound;
 Unfitted, then, for sons of men to dwell,
 It seemed more like the gloomy realms of hell.

On this the Monarch cast His piercing eyes,
 And 'fore Him saw the joyless waste to rise ;
 He saw the clouds in wild disorder haste,
 While underneath all things were void and waste,
 Until th' omnific Word through space was hurled,
 And from confusion sprung a lovely world.
 Upreared here, the glorious Lord most high,
 The massive pillars of the circling sky.
 The gathered waters ran the new world round,
 Nor could, as yet, the solid land be found ;
 No grass did then these ocean fields adorn,
 No scent of flowers upon the breezes borne ;
 No light or heat the gloomy world to cheer,
 But all was watery desert, swart and drear.
 Once more the Almighty Lord of angels spake—
 At that dread voice all heaven and earth did shake :
 The light rushed forth o'er all the dark abyss,
 And in its joy the sparkling waves did kiss ;
 Then did th' Eternal, from the new born light,
 Divide her sable sister, gloomy night ;
 While up to heaven's high throne, like incense sweet,
 The bright rays rose, and gathered at His feet.

 CANTO III.

Continues the history of the Creation, with an account of the formation of Eve, the part referring to Adam's creation being missing. Then, having rested from His labours, the Almighty surveys the beauty of His works :—

The even first ran on its daily track,
 And the dark clouds press'd the sheer brightness back ;
 The Lord himself then called the darkness—Night ;
 The second day there followed darkness—Light.
 Life's Guardian, now, the water floods divides
 The cloudy burden from the earthly tides ;
 From the round earth the Powerful then uphove
 The compact skies, and bade them stand above :
 The lofty skies that o'er all people rise,
 While sea from sea at His great mandate flies.

Then o'er the earth came swiftly marching on,
 The third great morn, ere yet dry land was known ;
 No spreading ways, or useful fields are found,
 The earth stands fast, with floods encompassed round.
 The Lord of Angels bade the waters flow,
 As 'neath the skies they hold their courses now ;
 Then forthwith under heaven the oceans stand,
 Stayed and divided by the solid land.
 Life's Guardian then saw far and wide displayed
 The dry expanse—"Let this be Earth," He said :
 In their just course the waves then roll around,
 Fix'd well and fettered by the solid ground.

At this part of the MS. three leaves seem to have been cut out ; by this, doubtless, the history of the Creation is rendered very incomplete, and the account of Adam's creation lost ; the next lines refer to Eve's formation :—

The Heavenly Guardian, then, saw Adam lone,
 And friend or comforter was by him none :
 Therefore for him, in this his lonely state,
 The Lord a woman made—a fair helpmate.
 Softly he slept, and fast he lay at rest,
 No soreness wist, nor any suffering guest ;
 Nor whilst the Lord of Angels from his side
 A jointed rib took out to form his bride,
 Did any blood the place with crimson stain—
 Ere Adam woke the wound was healed again.
 In their glad hearts no sinful passions move—
 Their bosoms glow with pure and ardent love ;
 With youth and beauty clad, they shone so fair,
 Well might they with th' angelic host compare.
 The Lord Himself the pair with joy surveyed,
 And while He blest, these were the words He said :
 "Teem now and wax, fill with your happy kin
 The all-green earth ; your reign forthwith begin ;
 To you the salt sea-waves shall service owe,
 And all creation shall in reverence bow.
 To you be subject all the horned band,
 And the wild beasts submit to your command—
 All living things that seek on earth their prey,
 And all that swim along the huge whales' way—
 These all shall you with humble fear obey."



The Angels proceeding to Paradise.

The Formation of Eve

(To face p. 16.)

CANTO IV.

Having thus related the story of the Creation, in the Fourth Canto the poet gives wing to his imagination and describes more particularly the fall of the rebel angels :—

Th' Eternal had an angel band,
 The work of His Almighty hand ;
 Ten tribes they were, endowed with skill,
 And formed by God to do His will.
 But one above the rest He made,
 Who under Him the heavens swayed ;
 So beauteous was this angel bright,
 Not fairer stars which shine at night,—
 'Twas his sweet task to praise the Lord,
 And prize the joys the heavens afford ;
 To thank his Lord for lengthen'd bliss—
 To serve and love—his labour this.
 But from the good to worse he turned,
 And 'gainst the highest Ruler burned,
 And dared in dreadful war to rise,
 With Him, the Monarch of the skies.
 Proud of his form, so bright and fair,
 Not God for master could he bear :—
 "Why should I toil at all?" said he,
 "Since 'tis not needful unto me
 To have a Master ; with my skill
 I work such wonders as I will ;
 And in these hands I've power mine own
 To raise in heaven a higher throne ;
 Then why should I bend my proud knee,
 Who may be God as much as he?
 Stand by me, O ye warriors dread,
 Ye who have chosen me for head ;
 Ye all are heroes, stern of mood,
 And zealous friends ye are, and good ;
 I am your chief ; we'll conquer all,
 Nor ever more in reverence fall."

The Almighty, observing the presumption of the false angel, is incensed against him, hurls him from his lofty

B

seat, and casts him into hell, where he becomes a devil. Three nights and three days the rebel and his companions were falling into the swart hell under the earth, where at even they had a renewal of fire, and ere dawn, the bitter eastern blast. Here they are tormented ; wherefore Satan seeing their evil plight, harangues his miserable followers :—

This narrow house is most unlike the place
In heavenly heights which God gave by His grace ;
Yet hath He not done right to strike us down,
And leave to groan beneath His angry frown ;
The greatest grief is that the earth-born brood
Shall gain our mansions while this hell we crowd ;
O that these hands might wield their power once more,
That from this place one season I might soar,
With this brave host one winter might be free,
Then who is greater should decided be.
But round about me iron bands are lain,
And on me presseth sore this iron chain ;
So firmly grasped in hell's clasp am I left,
That of all power for warfare I'm bereft.
Here, all stretch'd wide, a mighty fire doth glow—
Above it spreads, and underneath doth flow :
Landscape more drear did ne'er these eyes engage,
While over hell the unchecked flame doth rage.
Me hath the clasping of these iron rings
Forbid to spread in upward flight my wings ;
Bound are my hands, and also bound my feet,
And hell's dark doors forbid my safe retreat.
Hard iron gyves God round my limbs hath placed,
In heat-forged gratings is my neck encased :
Thus I perceive that He my mind doth know,
And that, through us, to A'dam woe shall flow ;
But now we suffer chastisement in hell,
And in grim caves, hot and unfathomed, dwell.

CANTO VII.

Although we now come to the Seventh Canto, the speech of Satan is continued in a similar strain :—

“Yea, God himself hath us of light bereft,
And down to these dark mists in anger swept.”

And he proceeds to relate that God has made a new world and a new race, who are destined to fill their lost places. He, therefore, recommends that an attempt be made to corrupt man, so that God, being wrath, may consign him to the same hell with themselves, where he may serve them as vassal. The arch-fiend further says that if of old he hath bestowed upon any of them princely treasures, they cannot repay that kindness at a more convenient season, and he promises great privileges to any who shall effect the downfall of man. At this point the MS. is mutilated, but the sequel shows that one of the fiends has volunteered for the service :—

Prompt then th' apostate girt himself for war,
He had a crafty soul ;
On his proud head the chief his helmet placed,
Full strongly bound, and with broad clasps all braced :
Well formed unguarded creatures to beguile,
And by fair speeches gain his purpose vile.
Now straight departs he through the gates of hell,
And upward wheels to work his baneful spell ;
As the fierce lion quits his hungry lair,
Bounds o'er the earth and cuts the yielding air,
E'en so the fiend did in his wrathful pride
Cleave the red flames and dash them on each side.

He journeyed thus until he reached the earth, and discovered Adam and Eve in paradise. By them stood two trees, laden with fruit, but not alike. The fruit of one was pleasant, soft, delicate and delightful, and whoever ate

of it should no more be subject to death. Neither age nor sickness should impair his existence, but in this world he should have the favour of heaven's King, and honours in the high heavens when he should depart hence. Altogether different was the fruit of the other tree. It was utterly black, and whoever ate of it must have much pain, and sweat, and sorrow. His feet and body should soon feel the effects of age, and after a few painful years, he should forget the glory of brave deeds, and dying, seek the miserable realms of cloudy fire, and be servant to the fiends. Having taken the serpent's form, the fallen angel begins his deceitful task :—

At once with lies he tries the man to ply—
 “Adam, I bring a message from on high—
 Far have I travelled, at the Lord's command,
 Yet short the time since I did by him stand.
 He bade me say that now for thee 'tis meet,
 That of the tree of life thou straight should'st eat ;
 Then shall thy mind with increased wisdom glow,
 Thy stately form a new-found beauty show,
 If thou dost gratefully th' Eternal serve,
 With new-found power He will thine arm annerve.
 I heard the Lord in glory praise thy deed,
 And say no worldly treasure should'st thou need ;
 Therefore, behoves it, that thou now obey
 Whatever words His angels to thee say.
 In this great world are places broad and green,
 And God, who ruleth in the heavens serene,
 Will not himself descend always with thee
 To speak.—He hath commissioned me,
 He bids thee knowledge learn by what is here,
 See thou neglect not His kind words to hear.
 Take in thine hand this fruit, bite, taste, and eat,
 Thy heart with new delights shall sweetly beat,
 Thy radiant face with fairer grace shall shine,
 And life to thee shall then be all divine.”

But these words do not overcome Adam, and he replies :—

"When, with strong voice, the Lord gave His command,
What time He here did in the garden stand ;
And when He gave to me this lovely bride—
He bade me by His words to close abide—
And said that hell's black realm should be his fate
Who of the tree of death, rebellious, ate.
I know thee not, nor if thou'rt from the skies—
Thy ways may evil be, thy words all lies ;
Thy orders strange I do not understand,
But I do know what He did me command.
Thou art unlike the angels I have seen,
Thou bring'st no token from His hand I ween ;
Therefore I may not thy false words obey—
But pray thee hence to get thee far away.
In my Almighty God firm is my trust,
In Him who wrought me by His hand at first ;
And though His vassal He send not to me,
Yet from His lofty seat my wants can see,
And will supply, whate'er those wants may be."

CANTO X.

The numbering in all this part of the MS. is very irregular.

Having failed with Adam, the fiend turns wrathful to where he sees the woman standing, and tells her he is sure God will be incensed against them when He knows that they will not hear His messenger, and that He must come Himself for their answer. Yet there is one hope ; let Eve eat of the fruit, then may she rule Adam and secure his submission. If she succeeds, the angel will hide from the Lord the evil words spoken to him by Adam. He affects to be greatly injured by Adam's suspicions. What ! he one of Satan's servants, he who had served God so faithfully ! Not so ; "for," says he, "I am not like a devil."

The plan succeeds, and the poison taking effect, the woman receives the fruit from the deceiver's hand and eats of it. The fiend then tells her to inform Adam of the delights she enjoys, and promises if she will modestly obey his council he will be forgiven.

CANTO XII.

Eve begins to tempt Adam :—

The fairest woman that the world has trod,
 Because she was God's noble handywork,
 Then forward came to Adam where he stood;—
 Did she not know that innocence was fled,
 And hateful they must seem to their good God?
 They were undone, by Satan's lies misled,
 Their power all gone, God's favour also lost,
 Of their sad deed this was the heavy cost.

How oft to man doth doleful woe repair,
 When, warning nigh, he heedless shuts his eyes !
 Some in her hands the woman to him bare,
 Some nestling in her lovely bosom lies,
 Of that unblessed fruit, which heavenly care
 Had strict forbidden. Heaven's the prize
 If ye refrain. But eat—the guilty dies.

With lies enticed by the fell spirit of ill,
 Woman's weak thoughts to him do captive lie.
 His words she trusts, hastes to obey his will—
 Believes his mandates are from God on high,
 These words which he with so malicious skill
 Had spoken :—promised she should never die,
 But with new light the heavens and earth descry.

Then to her spouse with tempting words she spake,
 "Adam, my lord, mild is this fruit and sweet ;
 Within my breast it great delight doth make,
 And this bright being comes from God, to meet
 Us with good-will. For mercy's sake

Yield now, for well I by his raiment see,
It is God's angel, sent to thee and me.

Better his favour than his hate to gain ;
Doubtless he will forgive thy hasty word ;
Certes, with thy Lord's envoy strife is vain,
He'll bear our errands to our powerful Lord :
From hence I see, where He himself doth reign,
With bliss encircled, and by all adored,
Who formed the world by His almighty word.

I see His angels with their feathery wings,
Encompass Him, all winsome, all delight ;
From far I hear what joyous seraph sings,
Darts through creation my rapt vision's flight ;
Whence unto me this quick perception springs ?
Whence visit me these visions clothed with light ?
Unless from God, brought by His envoy bright."

CANTO XIII.

With such words Eve all day long urges Adam to partake
of the forbidden fruit, the deceiver standing by all the while.
She thinks that in eating she obeys the divine command,
hence her perseverance, which at length succeeds, and
Adam "takes from the woman hell and death." This sad
work done, the fiend speaks to himself in the joy of his
victory :—

Then laughed the fiend, his bitter end achieved,
"Gone is the joy that my great chief so grieved ;
Full many days are mortals base seduced,
And to sad woes, like ours, by me reduced !
From them God's love is sunder'd by my fraud,
And now must they, in grief, walk hell's dark road.
My chief need sorrow not in iron chains,
Since this new race must share our heavy pains :
Through thy proud will high courts in heaven were lost,
And God's dread wrath brought on a mighty host.

We would not serve as slaves, so we rebelled,
 Therefore into the fire by God were felled ;
 Blithe be thy mind, at peace may be thy breast,
 To thee the race of man as slaves shall rest.
 My heart again with joyous thoughts beats high,
 My mind is healed, stayed is my sorrow's sigh ;
 Since dark perdition doth for Adam call,
 And God will sorrow for His creatures' fall
 Now will I go the fiery flames to find,
 Where clasping rings my chief in gloom doth bind ;"
 So turned he downwards to the gates of hell,
 Where Satan lay, in fetters as he fell.

Now sorrow hath birth, and between Adam and Eve pass
 words of sadness ; for they begin to see that they have been
 deceived :—

The woman grieves, in penitence of soul,
 And o'er her breast the burning sorrows roll ;
 The light departs the fiend gave by his spell,
 And now they fear the punishment of hell.
 Sometimes together in deep prayer they fall,
 And on their Lord—the Good—beseeching call,
 And humbly ask, as conscious of their sin,
 That its full penalty should soon begin.

Then Adam begins to reproach his wife :—

"Thus, Eve, hast thou brought evil on us twain,
 Far hence must we depart, in grief and pain,
 See yon black cave, a rav'nous monster yawn,
 To us even here its ragings dire are borne ;
 Heaven's glorious realm is all unlike that hell,
 Yet there, alas ! we need not hope to dwell.
 And this because thou hast the fiend obeyed,
 And slighted Him by whom we both were made :
 While we were faithful we had no alarms,
 And God did kindly guard us from all harms ;
 Time brought no cares when we kept well His laws,
 Now thirst my bosom burns, and hunger gnaws.
 When from the west or east, or south or north,
 Clouds, winds, and heavy hail come showering forth ;

When one day frost, intensely cold, doth frown,
 And next the sun his burning beams darts down,
 Live, or abide, how shall we, in this land,
 When bare and garmentless we shivering stand?
 There is nought here for sustenance designed,
 And naught to guard us from the rain and wind.
 Now may it rue me that for thee I prayed,
 That thou from me, at my request, wert made;
 Thou hast seduced me from my good Lord's love,
 And He in anger will against me move.
 Ah! woe is me, that ever I did know thee:
 Ah! woe is me, that these eyes ever saw thee."

CANTO XIV.

Then replied Eve—the fairest female and the most
 comely wife, although she had been deceived by Satan—
 and Adam made answer:—

"Thy words may me reproach, my love, my life,
 Yet thy heart cannot, more than mine, it rue."

Then answered Adam to his comely wife:

"If I but knew what God wills for my due;
 Ne'er hast thou seen Him soothlier obeyed,
 Though in the sea he now should bid me wade.

Yea, though th' Almighty Lord should me command
 Into the swelling flood my way to take,
 Though ne'er so deep, I'd cheerful leave the strand;
 No doubt my steady mind should from it shake,
 The sea should not alarm; beneath His hand
 I'd seek the deepest depth, without a sigh,
 If so I might with His high will comply.

I have no mind for any service more,

Since my Lord's favour I have treated so;
 But not thus naked may we weep and cower;
 Into this weald let us together go,
 Within the shadow of this leafy bower."

'Twas thus they went with sorrow in their heart,
 And 'neath the green boughs, silent, sate apart.

There they the mandate of their King expect,
 While of His gifts they feel the woeful want ;
 With leaves their naked bodies they bedeck'd—
 Protected from the cold by shady plant.
 Yet did they not, while thus, to pray neglect,
 But every morn they on the Mighty call,
 To teach them how to live in their sad fall.

After midday came the great Prince of paradise, walking
 in the garden to see if His children needed anything ; but
 they, in a cavern, had hid themselves, and were dreading
 the voice of the Lord. Adam speaks humbly :—

“Lord of my life, all garmentless I am,
 “Oh ! cover me with leaves and hide my shame ;
 A criminal, I dare not leave this place,
 For sin is hateful, and I dread Thy face.”

CANTO XV.

Then God answered him thus :—

“Tell me, my son, why in the shade abide ;
 And bashful, why thy nakedness dost hide ;
 Why, weeping, dost thou cower amongst the leaves,
 While 'midst all joy thy troubled bosom heaves ;
 A garment craves, and in thy mind art sad ;
 Hast thou the apple tasted I forbade ?”
 Then Adam sadly answered, “O my Lord,
 The goodly woman gave, and I Thy word
 Most shamefully forgot. The fruit I ate,
 And bear a token in my woeful state.”
 Then God to Eve : “Say, why did'st thou despise
 The flowing blessings of this paradise ?
 This new creation for your good was made,
 And growing gifts th' abundant trees did lade ;
 But one of all with words I strict forbade.”

CANTO XVI.

Eve replies that the serpent did prompt to crime with base urgency.

Then God to Eve in anger said, "Depart :
Henceforth to man a subject slave thou art ;
In fear of him thy errors expiate,
And in affliction thy sad death await ;
While through much pain, 'mid woeful wail and moan,
Thy sons and daughters are in sorrow born."
Announced then the Lord to Adam eke :
"An exile, thou another land shalt seek—
A joyless dwelling, where no pleasures bloom,
Naked and poor, behold this is thy doom :
And thou, for this, in labour and in pain,
Shalt earn thy bread, while sweat thy face doth stain ;
Thus shalt thou live, till by diseases spent,
Thy soul at last shall quit its earthly tent."
By this we know whence all our evils came,
Our wrath and woe, our misery and shame.

The Lord then gave them clothing, bidding them therewith to hide their nakedness, and to depart from Paradise into a narrower life.

The joyous home of comfort and delight,
They left behind in miserable flight ;
A holy angel, bidden by the Lord,
Then shut the doors and stood with fiery sword :
No guileful man, crime-stained, there journey might,
For God hath strength, Who guards it from our sight.
Yet though the Father hid His glorious face,
He took not from them all that could solace ;
But in His mercy left for their behoof,
With holy stars lit up, the lofty roof.¹

After this sin they inhabit a more sorrowful land. Here were born to Adam and Eve two comely sons. Books

¹ See Dante, 'Purgatorio,' Canto I,
"Li raggi delle quattro luci sante."

inform us how these first labourers gained goods. One tilled the earth ; the other kept cattle in aid of his father. Each brings an offering to the Lord. Abel's accepted ; Cain's rejected. Through envy, Cain slew his brother. From this crime sprang many miseries. We may sorrowfully lament this the earliest deed of guilt done by the earth-dwellers.

The poem then, going on to the conclusion of the first book, is little more than a paraphrase of scripture history, although here and there are places where the writer has borrowed somewhat from imagination. The first book numbers fifty cantos, of which some, however, are missing. They bring down the sacred history as far as Belshazzar's feast and Daniel's interpretations. But, whether from the writer's choice or because parts are lost, the history is not perfect. After the life of Abraham we come at once to the story of Moses ; the long interval in which Isaac and Jacob and Joseph lived and acted being passed by. From Moses we advance direct to Nebuchadnezzar, the history of Daniel and the Hebrew children ; and, as we have said, the book concludes abruptly with an account of Belshazzar's feast and Daniel's interpretation of the handwriting upon the wall.

Nor is the story of the characters of whom the poet writes always full : for instance, although the life of Abraham is dwelt upon at great length, the beautiful episode in which the patriarch pleads with Jehovah for the wretched cities of the plain is left out. So with the history of the Israelites, for the poet conveys them safe to the further shore of the Red Sea, destroying their enemies in its waters, and then passes on to the Chaldean captivity, the only reference to the history of the Jewish nation being short and general. Altogether, it is evident that a great part of the poet's writings has perished ; or else that he only wrote fragmentary

selections as the spirit moved him, or as the means at his disposal permitted him. There is sufficient here, however, to shew that the man who wrote, and the people who either read or heard, had no slight acquaintance with the Old Testament Scriptures.

CANTO XVII.

God questions Cain ; his punishment ; his remonstrance ;
 God puts a mark on him that he may not be slain. Enoch ;
 Lamech ; Jabal.

The Chief of Angels, Spirit rich in good,
 To Cain replied, " Behold thy brother's blood
 Calleth and crieth from the slaughter-bed,
 Where, by thy cruel hand, he now lies dead.
 Why hast thou him, the upright man, thus smote?
 Accursed be thou for this to times remote.
 From thy own dwelling, lo ! a sad exile,
 Far shalt thou wander ; to thy kindred vile,
 Earth shall to thee her fairest fruits deny,
 No useful cattle shall thy wants supply,
 For thou hast made thy brother's blood to flow,
 And shame shall dog thee far as thou may'st go."

CANTO XVIII.

Tubal-Cain ; Lamech slays Cain. Seth ; Adam dies ;
 Seth becomes patriarch ; Enos ; Cainan ; Mahalaleel.

The following is Cædmon's version of Genesis iv. 23, 24.
 Lamech speaks to his two wives Adah and Zillah, "a
 wicked spell" :—

Then Lamech spake to his dear consorts twain—
 "The beloved kinsman of my sons I've slain ;
 My hands polluted in the blood of Cain,
 Even now his life-blood doth the earth bestain.

Well know I that the mighty King of Truth
In sevenfold terror shall avenge Cain's ruth,
But mine grim horror will requite, when I
Shall leave this world and meet my destiny."

CANTO XIX.

Mahalaleel patriarch ; Enoch taken to heaven while still living ; Noah ; Shem ; Ham ; Japhet.

Of Enoch we read that while he was chief he upheld his kingdom and lordship, and the people were glad under his sway. Three hundred winters was the Lord gracious to him (the Ruler of the Skies) while he sought for happiness in the favour of the Eternal. He did not die the death of middle-earth, as men young and old do here when God takes away at once their treasure and their life ; but, while living, he departed hence with the King of Glory, clad in the robe which his spirit received before his mother brought him forth amongst men. Methuselah longest enjoyed this world's delights.

CANTO XX.

Seth's offspring marry with Cain's. God repents of having made man. The flood foretold to Noah ; he builds the ark.

CANTO XXI.

The flood :—

The Lord from Heaven sends mighty showers of rain,
The well-brooks throng from every bursting vein,
The streaming torrents from their sources gush,
And o'er the boundary staith the dark sea waters rush.

O stern in might was He who ruled the waters then,
Who covered and o'erwhelmed the wretched sons of men;
Their native lands and homes this desolation saw
Full forty days and nights; thus God avenged His law,
The King of Glory's waves crushed out their guilty breath,
Thus stern their punishment who met this awful death.

CANTO XXII.

God remembers the seafarers; the waters are assuaged;
the ark rests on the mountains of Armenia.

The chieftains and their wives also longed for the time
when they might step over the nailed boards and from
confinement lead out their possessions. Then he tried
forward of the ship whether the sea-flood were yet sinking,
and he let fly a swart raven, expecting that if it found not
land it would seek the wave-house again, but the bird
perched on the floating corpses and came not back.
Seven nights after he sent forth a dove to see whether
the foamy sea had given up any parts of the green earth.
Widely she flew but with her feet she might not perch on
land nor step on the tree leaves, for the steep mountain
tops were with water covered, so she returned, weary and
hungry, to sink into the hands of the holy man:—

Again was sent the dove when passed a week,
Widely she flew, and far, a rest to seek;
Much she rejoiced, when, weary with her flight,
She set her feet upon the topmost height
Of a tall tree; and on the waving spray
Rested, and shook her feathers; then away
She with her gifts went flying through the air,
A twig of green-leaved olive, back to bear.
The lord of seamen quickly understood
By this, the assuaging of the mighty flood;

The blessed man, when the third week was fled,
 Forth from the Ark again a wild dove sped,
 Which came no more, for she had found the land,
 And now might gladly midst the green grooves stand;
 Nor would she more to the pitched boards proceed,
 For of the strong-house now she had no need.

CANTO XXIII.

Heaven's King-Ward speaks to Noah with holy voice
 bidding him go forth in peace with all the living creatures
 saved on the mountain's side when the water had covered
 a third part of the country. Noah's sacrifice to God.
 The command to increase. The eating of blood forbidden:
 human life sacred, for man was first made in the likeness
 of God and the angels. A token of mercy—the shower-
 bow. Noah and his three sons and their four wives,
 named respectively Percoba, Olla, Ollivia, and Ollivani.

CANTO XXIV.

Noah founds a home; his vineyard (Gen. ix. 20); weary
 with feasting and with wine; drunken; he sleeps; his
 head swims; his senses gone; his nakedness. Ham's sin.
 Shem and Japhet. Ham denounced. Noah's posterity.

CANTO XXV.

Shem's offspring. In that tribe the men were good.
 Eber: from that earl sprang the Hebrews. The people
 seek a more roomy land. Shinar. Become lovers of
 pleasure. Their arrogance. They build a high city; and
 up to Heaven rear the ladders. The confusion of tongues.
 They are dispersed in four different ways, while behind

the rugged stone-tower and the steep-burgh alike half wrought on Shina stand.

The race of Shem wax and flourish. Abram and Haran born in Babylon. Sarah ; she is childless. Abram's father, when 205 winters old, goes forth to see the Godhead. God commands Abram to depart :—

Then spake the Holy Guardian of the skies—
To Terah's son the Eternal said, "Arise,
Now fare thee forth, thy father's land resign,
And with thee lead all that thou callest thine ;
Go, well-beloved of men, as I command,
And I will shew to thee an all-green land.
In that wild region thou shalt safely live
Beneath My care ; My blessing I will give
To thee, and all who treat thee well shall have
Comforts as numerous as their hearts can crave :
But on their heads who meet thee with despite
My lasting hatred and My curse shall light ;
In thee all nations shall be greatly blessed,
And for thy sake on them My peace shall rest."

Abram obeys the divine command and finally reaches Sicham, where he builds an altar and sacrifices to the Protector of Spirits. Finally settles in Bethel.

CANTO XXVI.

Abram a second time builds an altar. Forced by famine into Egypt. Report of Sarah's beauty carried to Pharaoh, who commands her appearance before him. The king, harassed by God, requests Abram to depart, who returns to Bethel. Here the blessed man sacrificed to the Lord of Angels and thanked Him for joy and riches.

CANTO XXVII.

Abram and Lot. They separate. Lot goes to Sodom, where the green earth was moist with water and like God's paradise, till He for men's sins gave Sodom and Gomorrah to the fire. The people wicked, but Lot avoids their sinful ways. Abram remains in Canaan and obeys God gratefully.

CANTO XXVIII.

Battle of the kings:—

By Jordan's coast the hostile forces spread,
 And from their homes their numerous captives led.
 Must many a pale faced damsel trembling go
 To the loathed embrace of the hated foe:
 Brides whose fair wrists are with rich bracelets bound,
 Their heroes left, sick, wounded on the ground,
 To rescue Sodom and avenge their shame
 Forth from the south with warlike forces came
 Five kings of nations; for no more would they
 Submit to Elam, or their tribute pay.
 United they advance, their passions high,
 Loud rush the javelins, quick the war darts fly,
 The fowls of air on dewy-feathered wing
 Look on the deadly scene and sadly sing,
 While doughty warriors from their sheaths withdraw
 The ring-mailed swords which smite the mighty low.

Victory is with the northmen. The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah flee. The Elamites take plunder and captives. After the fight is the march of the war-wolves.

CANTO XXIX.

A fugitive brings the tidings to Abram. He departs with his retainers, conquers the enemy, and rescues his kinsmen:—

With flying speed came one the war had spared,
To tell the Hebrew earl how Lot had fared,
He to his friends the mournful tale repeats,
Grieves for his brother's son—their aid entreats.
These valiant chiefs their sympathy declare
And pledge their faith his righteous cause to share;
With their bold words his heavy grief they heal,
His toils espouse, and join with generous zeal,
And swear to make his haughty foes to fly,
Or on the field of slaughter with him die.

Then the holy chief bade his hearth-retainers take their weapons; he found eighteen, and all eke bearers of the ash—faithful men who could each wield well in battle the fallow linden. Abram then departed with the three earls. The warriors were renowned; they stoutly bore their shields. The war-wolves had neared the camp when he said to his leaders that he must in two parts shew to the strangers the hard hand-play, and that the Eternal might reward him with success at the strife of spears:—

Now when in sleep, beneath the shade of night,
The warrior bows, is heard the din of fight;
The war darts whiz, the heavy shields resound,
Sharp arrows pierce, thick fall the foes around.
Where late the northmen counted o'er their gains,
The triumph with the southfolk now remains.

CANTO XXX.

Melchizedek, the people's bishop, comes with gifts to meet Abram. The prince of Sodom requests Abram to give him the rescued damsels but to keep for himself the twisted gold, the wealth and the ornaments, while he himself should lead back to their wasted dwellings the women and youths with the poor widows whose sons were dead. Abram restores both the people and the treasures. God again appears to him.

CANTO XXXI.

Abram complains that God has not given him a son. God promises one. Sarah and Hagar. Hagar insults Sarah.

CANTO XXXII.

Sarah hates Hagar, who flees. An angel appears to her. Ishmael born. Circumcision commanded.

CANTO XXXIII.

Abram reflected on these things. His incredulity. He prays for Ishmael. God promises that he will bounteously bless Ishmael, but that another son, Isaac, shall be much more honoured.

CANTO XXXIV.

After this the "holy spirits" quickly departed. The "son of light" himself is their companion, till they behold the lofty walls of Sodom and see its silver halls and its palaces in ruddy gold. The Ruler of the Skies speaks to Abraham, declaring that he hears the loud uproar of sinners, and the ale drinkers boasting, and that in vengeance He will send upon them sulphur and swart flame.

CANTO XXXV.

The stern-minded King sends two strong messengers, who come to Sodom at even-tide. Lot meets them at the town-gate and offers them hospitality, which they thankfully accept. The inhabitants of Sodom gather in numbers at

Lot's door and demand that the guests be delivered up to them. The angels smite them with blindness. Lot commanded to leave the city, which is doomed to destruction.

CANTO XXXVI.

Lot cannot, with the women, escape on foot ; but there is a high town near, to which, if the angels will protect it from fire, he will repair. God's vengeance delayed till Lot shall escape to Zoar, which he reaches as the sun, "the life-candle of nations," is just risen.

Then, as I have learnt, Heaven's Prince poured boiling fire on these men, because for a long season they had vexed him. The cry of despair arises while the flame consumes all that it finds green in the golden cities. Around no small part of the wide land is overspread with burning and dismay ; the groves become cinders and ashes, and the raging flames swallow up the people with their dwellings.

When Lot's wife heard that fire-crash she backward looked. The Scriptures tell us that she straight became a salt-stone likeness which has so continued ever since (that is an awful tale). Now must she in that place her fate abide the Lord's doom, when through number of days the world shall have passed away.

CANTO XXXVII.

Abraham, journeying, sees the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot's daughters, Moab and Ammon. From these sprang two renowned nations.

CANTO XXXVIII.

Abraham goes down to Egypt: says Sarah is his sister. Abimelech takes her. Warned in a dream, he reproaches Abraham for the deception.

CANTO XXXIX.

Abraham justifies himself. Abimelech loads him with treasure; they abide together in friendship. Abraham entreats God for Abimelech that he may have children, which is granted. Isaac is born.

CANTO XL.

Sarah seeing Ishmael playing before Abraham demands that he and Hagar be banished. Abraham's grief. The Lord comforts him by promising that Ishmael shall found a mighty people. Abimelech's friendship for Abraham.

CANTO XLI.

God tempts Abraham to sacrifice Isaac on the steep downs; there he must make a bale-fire, and, after sacrificing his son, burn the body with swart flame. Abraham's obedience; the son bare wood, the father fire and sword. God provides a sacrifice.

CANTO XLII.

Lo! far and near throughout the earth we have heard of the decrees of Moses. He was dear to God. He restrained Pharaoh by the power of his rod. Then was the first time that God approached him when He told him how the earth

was formed, which the ancient fathers knew not, though many things they knew. God strengthened him against the greatest of nations. At midnight the first-born was slain. Wailing on every side. The enemy was spoiled. Fell the infernal gods. Moses led the tribes forth.

CANTO XLIII.

They are commanded to encamp about the town of Etham :—

Now towards the north close press the favoured band ;
Far on the south they leave th' Ethiop's land
A people with hot coals of heaven embrowned,
The sun-scorched mountains on their journey frowned :
But there the Holy God a screen o'erspreads,
And from the burning skies protects their heads ;
So wide the cloud, it earth and sky divides,
And while it shelters, it the people guides.

The people were amazed. The wise God had the sun's course with a sail shrouded, though men knew not the mast ropes, neither might they see the sail-rod. Then was the third station. All the host saw how there towered the holy sails. They knew that the Lord was come a camp to mete. Before him went in the firmament two pillars which served the high services of the Holy Spirit—the march of the beloved—by day and night.

CANTO XLIV.

Loud was the shout of the people when the heavenly beacon rose each evening :—

Stupendous wonder ! at the daylight's close,
Before their eyes the heavenly beacon rose ;
Loud was their shout as they beheld the ray
The burning pillar to illumine their way ;

Clear the pale signal o'er the archers bowed,
And in its light the brazen bucklers glowed.
Nor might the gloom of night's deep shadows drear,
Nor horror of the waste fill them with fear :
For 'midst the darkness of the solemn night
The heavenly-candle burnt with steady light.

At the fourth station the shielded warriors rest by the
Red Sea, when sudden tidings come of the foe's pursuit.

CANTO XLV.

The people despond when they see the host of Pharaoh
coming forth. They prepare their arms. The war ad-
vances ; bucklers glitter ; trumpets sing ; standards rattle :—

Their arms are ready and their bucklers shine,
Loud sound the trumpets, floats the brave ensign.
Now, as the host of Israelites they near,
The screaming of the war-fowls they may hear ;
The dewy-feathered birds fly overhead,
Eager for blood, and greedy for the dead :
In hopes of food the ravenous wolves prolong,
In ceaseless howls, their horrid evensong.
At midnight, lo ! the march-ward cry arose,
And Israel's host were hemmed in by their foes.

The prince had chosen the flower of the people, two
thousand renowned men, kings and kinsmen ; a powerful
band, they came by thousands with their faulchions to
destroy the Israelites in vengeance for their brothers. The
people are hopeless. Moses commands his men with
brazen trumpets to gather them together. He bids them to
be courageous and to think on valiant deeds.

CANTO XLVI.

The bold leader, his shield upraised, steps before the
warriors and orders the chiefs to stay the march while he

addresses the people. He bids them be not fearful, for the Lord will open a way for them. The sea-wall rose. The tribe of Judah went first on the unknown way, therefore the mighty God for that day's work gave him eldership over the flower of his kinsmen.

CANTO XLVII.

The march continues. Digression about Abraham, including an account of his temptation to sacrifice Isaac.

CANTO XLVIII.

Missing.

CANTO XLIX.

Destruction of the Egyptians ; joy of the Israelites :—

From ocean's waves ascend their dying wails,
A bloody steam the mountain heights enveils,
The waters foam not white, but gory red,
And moaning cries through all the region spread.
Great store of weapons 'neath the salt waves lie,
And floats a death-mist to the darken'd sky ;
Backward they turn, and trembling seek to flee—
Their own homes now how gladly would they see !
The waves as clouds roll over them, and fate
O'erwhelms them all in one disastrous state :
Raged a wild sea where late a pathway lay,
And up to heaven dashed the wild storm its spray ;
With dying voices thick the air around,
And mighty war screams o'er the turmoil sound.
The shields are riven, and all the raging flood,
From shore to shore, is thick with human blood ;
The haughty die, and kings in numbers great,
When the proud waves resume their former state.

CANTO L.

The Jews prosperous in Jerusalem until their sins bring
upon them Nebuchadnezzar, who subdues them and
plunders the temple.

CANTO LI.

The Prince of Babylon's dream. Daniel interprets it.
The golden image set up. The three Hebrew youths refuse
to worship it.

CANTO LII.

The King is wroth and commands the furnace to be
heated. Azariah's prayer. An angel comes down :—

Then from the skies behold an angel bright,
Beauteous his form, his raiment glowed with light,
Who for their comfort and their rescue came,
Swept through the fire and dashed away the flame :
Saved by his power no hurt their bodies knew ;
But o'er their foes the burning shower he threw,
And in his wrath destroyed the sinful crew.

CANTO LIII.

The song of the Hebrew youths, evidently paraphrased
from the Apocryphal books :—

Merciful Father, all Thy works Thee bless,
Heaven and all angels Thy great might confess.

* * * *

The beauty of Thy handiwork so high,
And the clear water dropping from the sky.

* * * *

Thee those adore who dwell in glorious bliss,
And those bright worlds which we behold from this :
The sun and moon each in its own degree,
The stars of heaven, likewise, do sing of Thee.

The gentle dew, the precious fruitful shower—
 These, Mighty Lord, exalt Thy fame and power.
 All spirits praise Thee; yea, the burning flame
 And the bright summer magnify Thy name.
 Each land doth praise Thee; and the gloomy night,
 Or cold, or heat, as well as swift-winged light.
 Yea, Mighty Lord, the piercing frost and snow,
 And rolling seasons tell Thy power also.
 Thee the dread lightnings greatly magnify,
 As pale and swift, they flash across the sky.
 Eternal Lord, Thee caverns deep adore,
 The rocky hills, and salt seas as they roar.
 O Just Creator, Thee the floods do sing,
 And gushing waters from the sparkling spring.
 The whales praise Thee, and birds that float in air,
 The seas' produce, and wild beasts in their lair;
 Thee sons of men in their glad minds do love,
 But more than all the Jews Thy goodness prove.
 Rewarder of all men, Eternal King,
 We three Thee bless, Father of All we sing!
 True son of the Creator to Thee now,
 Saviour of souls, helper of men, we bow;
 Thee, Holy Ghost, Thy glory we relate,
 Lord of all wisdom, Thee we celebrate:
 Blessed art Thou o'er all this world's high roof,
 And every land must own Thy just reproof.

The King commands them to be brought forth. Orders
 the people to acknowledge God. Nebuchadnezzar dreams:
 Daniel interprets. The King's pride; his punishment;
 his restoration; confesses the power of God. The Jews
 live in peace.

This Canto is very long, and probably includes the fifty-
 fourth as well, as the latter is not reckoned, the first book
 finishing after fifty-three with Canto fifty-five.

CANTO LV.

Belshazzar's feast; the hand-writing on the wall; Daniel
 tells its meaning.

BOOK II.

THE Second Book returns to the fall of the rebel angels.

CANTO I.

The inhabitants of earth were not ignorant that the Creator had might when He fixed the world's region. He is omniscient; He created Adam; likewise the angels:—

Not hidden was it from the earthborn race
That when th' Eternal fixed this worldly frame
He had almighty strength. Yea He did place
The sun and moon and stars, and earth and stream,
The clouds that lift the waves from earth's broad face,
And by His word the deep expanse upholds
The middle earth and all thine eye beholds.

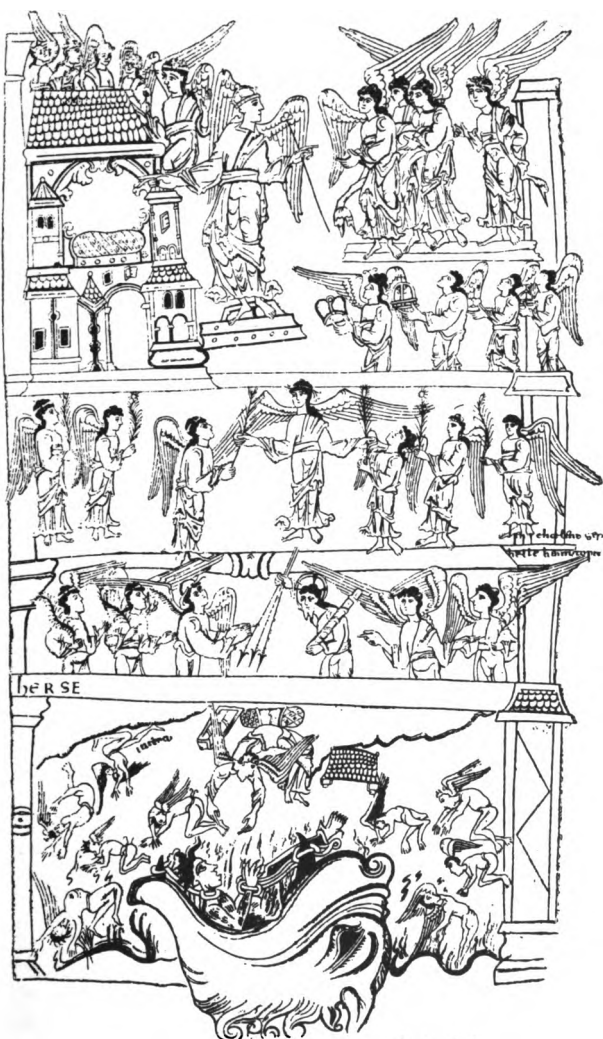
* * * * *

Hail, Pure Intelligence! who Thee can know
Save the Eternal God? The happy joys
Of virtue Thou most largely didst bestow.
Adam thou mad'st, and angels that rejoice—
But some rejoice no more, by sin brought low;
So great in power they lords of bliss beseeemed,
And themselves greater than th' Eternal deemed.

Then worse befell them when from heaven they fell
And in succession found a home in hell;
In that drear den they scorching heat must bide
And sorrow sore; no light their steps to guide.
Not in the heavenly home built strong and high
They now may dwell, but in the deep must lie;
Downward they dive into the painful flame
And in the greedy profound hide their shame—
God only knows the woes that them befell,
Then cried the chief with icy voice from hell:—
“Oh! where is come the heaven-born angel race,
This is a home of darkness and disgrace;
Strong fiery bonds do press its wretched halls,
The floor doth flame while scorching venom falls.”

* * * * *

The horrid ghosts, by sin and sorrow black
With torment shuddering, answered Satan back:—



The Duke Archangel and his adherents

The Fall of the Rebellious Angels

[To face p. 44]

"Thou with thy lying tongue to us did'st say—
That we the Saviour Lord should not obey.
To thee it seemed all power was thine own,
And thou in heaven and earth wert God alone;
Now thou poor wretch in sorrow art thou found,
And fast thy limbs in fiery chains are bound."

* * * * *

Thus they with grievous words their chief decried,
By Christ expelled, and driven to their doom;
Deprived of bliss because of their great pride,
Their forfeit thrones they change for hell's deep gloom
Their dwelling now where pleasures never bloom:
Blasted their heavenly sheen—scathed—outcast—pale,
They wander, wretched, through the burning bale.

—

CANTO II.

Satan again speaks and his pain revives:—

The mighty prince of fiends then speaks again,
And as he speaks revives his direful pain;
When he begins hate blackens his visage,
And fire and venom swell his voice with rage:
No more with joy his words are now exprest,
No joy for him though erst with glory blest—
"Once I in heaven a holy angel stood,
Dear to my Lord, and happy, great, and good;
Likewise this multitude with bliss endowed,
Till in my mind to bear the rule I vowed.
The Beam of Glory, God's own Son, o'erthrow,
And to my sceptre all the heavens bow;
And ye poor band that I have led to hell,
A painful home where we in bonds must dwell.

* * * * *

I am a foe to God, while at hell's gate
Dark dragons herd, but help not our sad state:
This woeful house is filled with torture round,
Yet hide we may not in the gloom profound.
Here no fair day dispels the clouds of night,
But awful shade instead of God's good light."

CANTO III.

Description of Hell. Satan's wretchedness:—

"My limbs, sin-wounded, are so much oppress,
 In this wide cell I find no place of rest ;
 Both heat and cold in mingled blasts prevail,
 Sometimes hell's slaves I hear in anguish wail—
 They moaning lie, stretched in the deep abyss,
 While round them naked, serpents wind and hiss.
 This windy cell is full in every part
 Of horrors thick that sink in woe my heart ;
 Ne'er may I look where towns and cities rise,
 Nor on the bright creation cast mine eyes.
 More grief to me that I heaven's glorious light
 E'er knew, or ever with yon angels bright
 Sung where the blessed Child of God now stands,
 Encircled by th' enraptured heavenly bands.
 Of souls created may I injure none,
 Save those whom He will not claim for His own ;
 Yea those alone whom He leaves to their doom
 May I bring captive to this dismal gloom."

Thus he regrets his former estate, and calls to mind the
 bliss he has forfeited. "Full oft they brought in their
 bosoms the Saviour Child, where we round about His
 loved form raised our songs of praise. Now I am stained
 with crimes." The words flow in sparks while he exclaims :—

"O Majesty of the Lord !
 O Patron of the Good !
 O might of the Creator !
 O mid-earth !
 O Light of Day !
 O Joy of God !
 O host of angels !
 O heaven above !
 O that I am bereft of all
 Eternal joy !"

"I may not the heaven reach nor look upward with my
 eyes, neither shall my ears hear the trumpet's voice, because
 I sought to drive from His throne the Son of the Creator."

CANTO IV.

The God-denier then turned to hell with his followers ;
therefore must every man be mindful not to grieve the
Powerful's Son ; let the miserable fate of the pale fiends
be a warning. Let us take delight in God, and choose
a dwelling-place with the King of Kings who Christ is
named :—

In our glad breasts thoughts pure and joyful bear
Whene'er we bend before the throne in prayer,
To ask that He, when this life's term is o'er,
Would grant a home upon a fairer shore :
A place than earth more spacious and divine,
Where winsome fruits in lustrous glory shine ;
Such home there is in heaven's exalted sphere,
There let us wend—the Saviour's throne is there.
In that dear home hosts of white angels stand,
And of blessed saints a holy heavenly band ;
Their words and works in glory shine afar—
The greatest world amongst all worlds that are,
Doth with their joyful praises wide resound,
While they the throne of Glory's King surround.

CANTO V.

Then, as I have learned, the fiends confessed that the
power was too great of Him they had offended, and they
must now wage a bootless war for they had lost for ever
their home in heaven :—

“ Yea we in glory might have ceaseless shone,
And raised our songs around His dazzling throne ;
There once we dwelt and heard the trumpet's voice,
And the glad sound of them who there rejoice.
There we in bliss beheld with joyful eyes
The Bright Word from His glory-seat arise.
The saints bow low, in reverence they fall,
While He smiles blessings on His angels all :

And His dear Son, himself the Mighty Lord,
Maker of Angels—ruling by His Word—
Looks kindly on the souls who enter in,
By Him redeemed from sorrow and from sin.”

“Then,” the fiend continues, “I took it ill that the Lord was strong and stern: then I began to step forth alone among the angels and to them all spake, I can give you lasting counsel if ye will believe in my power. Let us despise the great Supreme and gain for ourselves this glory.”

CANTO VI.

But God alone is King, Who is angry with them. Now must they lie in their crimes, or flit in the air, or float over the earth. Never may the fiend touch the blessed souls in their upward course from the earth; but he may lay hands upon the heathen knaves and snatch to perdition the God-deniers. “But will the Eternal,” sorrowfully asks the fiend, “ever in heaven’s kingdom allow us a home, as erst He did?” Thus the God-deniers lamented, for with them the Saviour God was wroth. For this cause must the good-hearted banish wicked thoughts and loathsome sins, and bearing in our mind the Creator’s strength, prepare before ourselves an all-green path to the angels above. If we resign ourselves to the Holy One for help He will not desert us; but he will give us a more stable home, where, with the King of Glory, we may dwell throughout all ages.

CANTO VII.

Once more describes the wretchedness of the fallen angels. In that dire hall horror and wailing are heard afar, and teeth gnashing and men’s groans:—

Then was their chief, who with his crew first came
 To that dread place, fast bound with fire and flame ;
 His followers eke a doleful wretched band,
 Perforce inherit this most gloomy land.
 Nor more may they the holy music hear,
 As once they heard when with the angels fair ;
 But here must dwell where horrid wailings are,
 And gnashing teeth, and men's groans heard afar.

But the Father of mankind will lead the good to a
 bright dwelling-place, and glorious shall every one be
 who is mindful to obey the Saviour.

CANTO VIII,

The Saviour goes down to hell. The fiends are overwhelmed with fear when they hear the thunder, and when the doors of hell are rent ; but men are glad to see the Saviour's face. The fallen angels recognise Him as the Powerful's Son, who will lead up from thence the souls of men, while they themselves will ever after suffer punishment :—

Then at the dawn the sound of angels came.
 And crashing thunders pealed the Saviour's name ;
 He led them forth, the blessed souls of men,
 But Eve might not look on heaven's glory then
 Until in words she owned her sin.
 "I, I alone, Eternal Lord, Thee grieved,
 When by the serpent's guileful words deceived ;
 That baneful one, who aye shall burn in pain,
 Taught us that we a home in bliss might gain.
 I took the bright fruit from the holy tree,
 Therefore condemned in this hot den to be ;
 O bitter pain within this place to hide,
 And burning still, thousands of years to bide.
 Now I beseech Thee, Guardian of the Skies,
 That with my kindred I may upward rise !
 By the bright angels in Thy glorious train
 Bring me into Thy favour once again."

Here the MS. is faulty and the continuation lost.

Oppressed with their chains, hell's captives are again represented as being glad at the Saviour's entrance:—

Then rising, each, well as for chains he might,
Leant on his hands to see the wondrous sight;
And 'midst their sufferings all were glad to tell
That for their sakes their Lord descends to hell.

After another interruption this chapter closes with a reference, probably to Adam, "raught then with his hands to the King of Heaven and prayed for pity through Mary, saying, 'Verily Thou from my daughter wast born on earth for the help of man, but now is it seen that Thou thyself art God.'"

CANTO IX.

The Lord then let them ascend when He thrust the fiends further into deep darkness. Fair was the sight when the company went up and the Eternal went with them. The First-born of God addresses them, recalling to their memory the story of their creation and fall. Then when no might of men, nor of angels; no work of prophets, neither human wisdom could help, He went to earth; born of a woman; suffered the scorn of men for three and thirty years; He interceded for them when on the tree the soldier pierced Him, and the youth struck Him, and so obtained deliverance for them and eternal joys.

CANTO X.

The resurrection of Jesus. Satan, girt with iron, might not that great force resist when the Lord God from death arose. He bade the disciples meet Him in Galilee. Peter spake, saying, "Art Thou thus Lord with power gifted? We saw Thee in loathsome bondage at one time: but Didymus doubted till he touched the Saviour's side."

They fell on earth in the bath of baptism. Forty days the Lord on earth was followed by His people and known of mankind ; then He ascended to heaven, and there hosts of angels surrounded Him. But Judas, His betrayer, is miserable in hell. Now the Saviour dwelleth in glory, and giveth help to men and inviteth them thither, where there is a life more glorious than we on earth may ever obtain.

CANTO XI.

The day of judgment. The archangels shall call with loud voice ; shall blow trumpets over earth, and from the dust the dead shall awaken and arise. The good shall be parted from the vile. Then will they be happy who may enter the city. To them all the King shall say, "Ye are welcome : go into glory's light ; there ye shall have eternal rest." But the sinners shall tremble ; they shall not go to the grand city like the others, but God will condemn them :—

To this lost crew the Eternal Lord shall say
 "Descend, accursed, far from the light of day."
 Soon as these words are heard the spirits fell,
 Death's wretched slaves shall lead them down to hell.
 By thousands driven and thrust into the ground,
 Escape for them will ne'er again be found ;
 In that cold den they'll suffer woeful pains,
 And aye endure their torments and their chains.

* * * * *

O let us then while in this world alway
 The Saviour's precepts faithfully obey ;
 And through God's grace, led by the Holy Ghost,
 Be mindful how on high the blessed host
 Sit with the heaven-bright Son of God.
 Fretted with gems is all that golden gate,
 And round the walls blessed souls do congregate ;
 While in that light of joy bright angels shine,
 And holy martyrs with their voices join

The Mighty Father of them all—they sing
Protector, Origin, High Judge, and King !

It is thus that the great multitude before the throne magnify the Guardian of Glory. He who endured death for us.

“Moreover, He fasted forty days.”

After which an episode is introduced relating to the temptation of Christ in the wilderness. This is the Saviour’s answer to Satan’s tempting :—

Answered the Lord, “Into the pit depart,
Pain is decreed, for Satan’s self thou art ;
God’s kingdom will not ope its gates for thee,
Nor eke to those who in that torment be.
But thou may’st say thy greatest woe has been
That thou the Lord of all mankind hast seen ;
Turn thee behind Me, fiend accursed, and tell
How wide and long is the drear pit of hell ?
With thy hands mete it, grasp its full compound ;
Go from the top into its deep profound :
See where black smoke spreads out in thickening waves,
Measure the width where’er it fills those caves :
Then, when thy hands the height and depth attain,
Then wilt thou know thou strivest with God in vain.”
The Accursed then to heavy exile ran,
And with his hands began his woes to span ;
Now ere the Loathed One seized the burning flame,
Beheld he there hell’s captives lie in shame.
When they his horrid form saw with their eyes,
They filled the region with their awful cries :
When the pale spirit reached the burning floor,
To him it seemed from thence unto hell’s door,
A hundred thousand miles of measured space—
Thus did he meet his torments and disgrace.
Then, as he stood upon that loathsome ground,
And threw his ireful eyes far, far, around,
Uprose the fiends, which there in crowds were laid,
And these the words which they, bewailing, said :—
“Lo ! now in evil shalt thou ceaseless be,
Since good thou would’st not, good thou ne’er shalt see.”

Finis Liber II. Amen.



THE RUTHWELL CROSS.

[To face p. 53.]

CÆDMON

At Ruthwell, in Dumfriesshire, there is an interesting relic of the past ; it is a Runic Cross, which, after suffering many indignities in days of Reformation zeal, being overthrown and broken into pieces, was, in the early years of the nineteenth century, as far as possible restored to its original state, and set up in the garden of the manse where it now stands, bearing the scars of its wounds upon it.

This Cross is to be noticed here because of its Runic inscription, "*Cædmon made me*," and some lines which have been traced to an ancient Anglo-Saxon poem called 'The Vision of the Holy Rood.' In 1866, Professor George Stephens, of Copenhagen, published, in folio, an account of it, with drawings and translations, and in this work he, without hesitation, ascribed the authorship of the poem to Cædmon. In a more guarded manner the Bishop of Bristol, in his very interesting book 'Theodore and Wilfrith,' agrees as to a portion of it. 'The Vision of the Holy Rood' opens thus :—

"List now, lordlings, at dead of the night, when men were sleeping, in a dream I beheld a wonderful tree ; mantled with light ; glittering with gold. Four gems had its corners, five had its shoulders ; the seraphs gazed on it, the angels beheld it. No gallows of criminal, good men on earth, bright spirits from heaven, came with their greeting.

"I, sin-stained and wounded, also looked on it ; shining

and shimmering, garnished with gold, lustrous with jewels, yet saw I plainly how grim ones had gashed it. Down from its sides the red drops were trickling; anguish o'erwhelmed me because of the vision and I sighed at beholding the tree of our Healer. At length it cried to me—that tree most blessed :—

“ ‘In days gone, it was at the skirts of the forest where the sharp axes smote me; strong foes overcame me. Then by thralls was I lifted; on their shoulders they bore me, to the hill side they brought me.

“ ‘Then the Lord of mankind came. I dared not bend low, for my Lord did not will it, although all around me earth's bosom was quaking. ¹ *For the struggle then girded Himself the young Hero; He was God the Almighty; strong of heart and pure minded; fearless He was when He stepped on the gallows. In spite of themselves earth's tribes He would ransom. When He clasped me I shuddered, yet bow down I could not.*

“ ‘*Now was I upreared, the Rood of Life's Monarch; bend me I dared not; dark nails they drave through me; the deep scars are on me and the wounds of rude hammers. Yet dared I not kill them; they mocked us and smote us: with the Blood was I dabbled, with the Blood that gushed forth when He gave up His spirit.*

“ ‘*On that hill how I suffered while Him I saw hanging! Dark clouds underspread the sheen of the heavens; over the welkin the shadows lay heavy. Creation bewailed the death of its Maker; it was Christ on the Rood Tree. His friends came near to Him; lowly I bent to the hands of His servant if so I might help them.*

“ ‘*Lo, now their Lord from the cross they have taken: me do they leave with the blood-drops all streaming, the strong*

¹ These lines are on the Ruthwell Cross.



THE ABBEY PLAIN CROSS.

[To face p. 55.

From "Horne's Guide to Whitley."

nails all wounded. Down now they lay Him, limb-weary and lifeless, the Holy One now from the death-struggle resting.

“‘A mould house they dig ; out of bright rock they form it ; and in it they lay Him while death-songs sadly chanting, and there in His lonesome chamber they leave Him.

“‘Awhile we stood there¹ till the battlemen came ; to the ground they soon hewed us ; weird was it and awful ; they delved out a pit and in it they hid us. But soon the Lord’s thanes came ; they came and they found us. Me they drew forth and gleeful adorned, with rich jewels bedecked me.

“‘Thus hearest thou, heart-friend, that from evil men much have I suffered. Now wide and far am I honoured ; to this symbol men bend in bede because on me God’s Bright One suffered.’”

We need not allow slight inconsistencies to trouble us ; such writings have come down to us from men of “humble, lowly, reverent and obedient hearts.”

* * * * *

The sun rises early upon the time-fretted ruins of Streons-halh ; when from the eastern horizon he throws his beams across the waters of the German Ocean, lighting up the dark strata of the cliffs and making the broken water at their base sparkle like diamonds, he clothes in beauty few fairer scenes than that which is crowned by the decaying yet majestic edifice of the departed Benedictines, declared by the late Count de Montalembert to be the noblest site in Europe of any abbey of that famous monastic order.

“As we rest among its heaps of fallen wall and tower, we hear the sea roaring below the cliff and the sound fills the aisles like the chanting of a solemn mass. We think then

¹ The crosses.

that this deep organ note struck on the ears of Hild twelve hundred years ago and that the first chant of English poetry was made to its grave and mighty music, and so deep is the impression of antiquity when we are thus forced to look back over the continuous stream of English poetry that we seem when we leave the eastern end of the abbey, to be walking with Cædmon himself among his own cattle over the rank grass to the outjutting point of the headland which looks due north over the sea. A few minutes bring us to the edge. Three hundred feet below the dash of breakers is heard as they strike into the black caverns at the base of the cliff. The tumultuous northern sea lies outspread before us. Over these stormy seas came our Angle forefathers bringing with them the poem of Beowulf; over them Cædmon looked at evening as he framed the verse in which he sang of Noah's flood."¹

It was not in this lovely minster that Cædmon lifted his voice in worship. He had slept in his grave six hundred years when the monks of Whitby set about the erection of their holy house. But on this hill it was that the saintly Hild ruled in wisdom her famous community, and here it was that the humble cowherd's tongue was divinely touched with the live coal of poetic inspiration.

In the plain between the parish church and the decaying abbey stands yet erect the ancient cemetery cross, a fluted column, with its deeply-worn rows of steps around it. Three hundred and fifty years of neglect have not entirely destroyed its grace. For generations it has in summer days been the target of irreverent lads, who have helped on the too tardy efforts of time and weather to destroy its graceful rood. Alas for our sin! We too have the memory of guilt upon us; the climbing of its pillar; the deadly shot of stone

¹ Stopford Brooke, 'Early English Literature,' vol. ii, pp. 77-78.



THE CÆDMON MEMORIAL.

[To face p. 57.]

From "Horne's Guide to Whitby."

upon it ; the heedless merriment with which we dealt havoc upon a beauty we did not comprehend !

And now in the old churchyard, hard by the summit of the one hundred and ninety-nine steps leading to it, stands another cross of rare beauty. Learning and artistic ability and deft hands have united to give to this age a pillar of stone, destined, we may reasonably believe, to teach its lessons far into the distant future. We take the following description of it from the account published by the Committee of erection :—

“The Cædmon Cross, standing twenty feet high, is hewn out of the fine grained hard sandstone of the Black Pasture Quarry in Northumberland. Upon its front are carved panels of the Christ in the act of blessing, of David playing the harp, of the Abbess Hild, and of Cædmon in the stable inspired to sing his great song. On the arms of the Cross above are the symbols of the four evangelists, and the Agnus Dei in the centre. Below is the inscription :—*‘To the Glory of God, and in memory of His servant Cædmon. Fell asleep hard by A.D. 680.’* On the obverse is carved a double vine symbolical of Christ, and in the loops are found figures of the four great scholars trained at Whitby in Cædmon’s time, under Abbess Hild, namely Bosa, Aetla, Oftson, and John (afterwards of Beverley). On the arms of the Cross above are bosses and knot-work with the emblem of the dove and the letters Alpha and Omega. Beneath are inscribed the first nine lines of Cædmon’s Hymn of the Creation,¹ as preserved to us on the flyleaf of the Moore Bæda in the Cambridge Museum, and as carefully rendered into English by the Anglo-Saxon Professors at Oxford and Cambridge. The runes of the same nine lines are also

See page 4.

carved on the border of one of the sides of the Cross, and the same inscription appears in Saxon minuscule on the border of the opposite side. The two sides of the Cross contain respectively a conventionalised English wild rose with birds and animals, and an apple tree emblematical of Eden, conventionalised also with other birds and animals. The symbolism of these sides is intended to teach that all gentle life under the protection of the Cross of Christ should abound and be happy. A harp is seen at the foot of the Tree of Life, as emblematical of the harmony which Christ restored, and as suggestive of the immortality of Christian song; and the wild roses, the badge of St. George, spring from an old Iona cross, typifying that the Life of the Christian Church ran on and bore fruit and flower at Whitby."

For this work of art, Whitby is chiefly indebted to Canon Rawnsley, Vicar of Crosthwaite. It was he who originated the memorial and worked at it untiringly till it was brought to a successful issue. It was fitting that it should be fashioned closely after the Ruthwell Cross, and Mr. Hodges, the well-known antiquary, did well in taking that interesting Saxon pillar for his pattern.

The Poet Laureate unveiled the Memorial on a bright and beautiful day in September, 1898. "Chaucer," he said, "has been called 'the morning star of English poetry,' but it seems to me the declaration would be more aptly applied to Cædmon, since, prior to the publication of the Prologue to the 'Canterbury Tales,' the glorious sunlight of English song had already illuminated the horizon. Cædmon was wholly unencumbered with the lumber of learning, and therefore more impressionable to the two main sources of poetic inspiration—external nature and the human heart. He beheld the glorious framework of headland and breaker

on which Whitby still stands, but just think what were your wind-swept, beck-furrowed moorlands in the days of Cædmon. Nature wielded an absolutely unchallenged sceptre. It was in listening to her mystic voice and in her majestic presence that he learned to shape his verse. You all know those lovely lines of Wordsworth:—

‘Beauty born of wandering sound
Hath passed into her face,’

but would it not be equally true to say that this ‘beauty born of wandering sound’ passes into the poet’s heart? But though external nature is the main teacher of the poet, there is yet another, and Cædmon did not lack this second helpmate of his muse. It was a woman, a woman who was both a princess and a saint, with whom he found both shelter and inspiration, and I have sometimes thought it not too fanciful to say that Cædmon was Hild’s Laureate. But be it reverently said, there is still a higher and more sacred influence than that of either nature or woman, and Bede tells us what that is when he says that Cædmon learnt the art of poetry not from man nor of men, but of God. Thus alike by his rustic acquaintance and familiarity with the language and face of nature; by the limitations of his learning; by his willing submission to the influence of woman; and finally, by his lips being touched with hallowed fire, Cædmon may serve to stand as the enduring type of the English poet.”

Many other eloquent words were spoken by distinguished men who took part in the proceedings, and thus our earliest poet was welcomed into the company of England’s imperishable worthies.

* * * * *

We do not speak of Cædmon as Dante does of the sublime master of song—

“Che sovra gli altri, com’ aquila, vola.”

Not the soaring eagle of poesy ; not the greatest but the first, not only in England, but first in Europe, to sing in praise of God and of his Christ in the homely language of his people and time.

It is a pleasing reflection that this first singer in a language destined to become that of a world-wide race was a good man. There is no more beautiful story from our ancient annals than that of this poet of the olden time as related by the venerable Bede. How can we do better than repeat his own words? They are taken from Thorpe's version of King Alfred's translation.

"He was wont to make fitting songs which conduced to religion and piety ; so that whatever he learned through clerks of the holy writings, he would, after a little space, adorn with the greatest sweetness and feeling and bring forth in the English tongue. And by his songs the minds of many men were brought to a contempt for the world and to desires for a heavenly life. Moreover, many after him, in the English nation, sought to make pious songs ; but yet none could do like to him, for he had not been taught from men, nor through men to learn the poetic art, but he was divinely aided, and through God's grace received the art of song. And he therefore might never make aught of leasing or of idle poems, but just those only which conduced to religion and which it became his pious tongue to sing.

"He was a very pious man and to regular discipline humbly subjected, and against those who in otherwise would act, he was inflamed with the heat of great zeal, and he therefore with a fair end his life closed and ended.

"For when the time approached of his decease and departure, then was he for fourteen days ere that oppressed and troubled with bodily infirmity ; yet so moderately that during all the time he could walk and talk. There was in

the neighbourhood a house for infirm men, to which it was their custom to bring the infirm and those who were on the point of departure and there attend to them together.

"Then bade he his servant on the eve of the night that he was going from the world, to prepare him a place in that house, that he might rest. Whereupon the servant wondered why he this bade, for it seemed to him that his departure was not so near; yet he did as he was commanded.

"And when he there went to bed, and in joyful mood was speaking some things and joking together with those who were therein previously, it came to pass that after midnight he asked whether they had the eucharist within? They answered, 'What need is to thee of the eucharist; thy forthgoing is not so near now, thou thus cheerfully and thus gladly art speaking to us?' Again he said, 'Bring me, nevertheless, the eucharist.'

"When he held it in his hands he asked whether they had all a placid mind and kind, and without any ill-will towards him. Then they all answered and said that they knew of no ill-will towards him, but they all were very kindly disposed and they besought him in turn that he would be kindly disposed to them all. Then he answered and said, 'My beloved brethren, I am very kindly disposed to you and to all God's men.'

"And he thus was strengthening himself with the heavenly viaticum, and preparing himself an entrance into another life. Again he asked, 'How near it was to the hour that the brethren must rise and teach the people of God and sing their nocturns.' They answered, 'It is not far to that.' He said, 'It is well, let us await the hour.'

"Then he prayed and signed himself with Christ's Cross, and reclined his head on the bolster and for a little space slept, and so with stillness his life ended. And thus it was

that as he, with pure and calm mind and tranquil devotion, had served God, that he in like manner left the world with as peaceful a death and went to His presence. And the tongue that had composed so many holy words in the Creator's praise, he then in like manner its last words closed in His praise, crossing himself and committing his soul into His hands. Thus it is seen that he was conscious of his departure from what we have now heard say."

And thus we may say with another poet, between whose day and Cædmon's there is a gulf of twelve hundred years :—

He set as sets the morning star,
Which goes not down behind the darkened west,
Nor hides obscured amidst the tempests of the skies,
But melts away into the light of heaven.

Some have thought that Milton was familiar with Cædmon's paraphrase ; we give a few coincidences without further remark than that it is also possible the later poet but made use of legends which had floated in the air for centuries and had become common property.

'Cædmon.' Book I. Page 3.

"When He knew it ready, furnished with perpetual night ; with sulphur charged ; with fire filled throughout and cold intense ; smoke and red flame ; bade then through the house of comfort void, to increase the dread of torment."

'Paradise Lost.' Book I. 59.

"At once, as far as angels ken, he views
The dismal situation waste and wild.
A dungeon horrible, on all sides round,
As one great furnace, flamed : yet from these flames
No light, but rather darkness visible.

* * * *

And a fiery deluge, fed
With ever burning sulphur unconsumed,
Such place eternal justice had prepared
For those rebellious."

‘Cædmon.’ Book I. Page 23.

“This narrow place is most unlike that other which once we knew, high in heaven’s kingdom.”

‘Paradise Lost.’ Book I. 75.

“Oh, how unlike the place from whence they fell!”

‘Cædmon.’ Book I. Page 3.

“Then spake he words from malice thirsty, that he in the north part of heaven’s kingdom a home and lofty seat would possess.”

‘Paradise Lost.’ Book V. 685.

“Ere yet dim night
Her shadowy clouds withdraws, I am to haste,
And all who under me their banners wave,
Homeward, with flying march, where we possess
The quarters of the north.”

‘Cædmon.’ Page 287.

“Because from His throne I would the Son of the Creator, the Lord, drive down.”

‘Paradise Lost.’ Book V. 657.

“But not so wicked
Satan ; (so call him now ; his former name
Is heard no more in heaven ;) he, of the first,
If not the first archangel, great in power,
In favour, and pre-eminence, yet fraught
With envy against the Son of God,—that day
Honoured by his great Father.”

‘Cædmon.’ Canto VII.

“He hath devised a world where He hath wrought man after His own likeness, with whom He will re-people the kingdom of heaven.”

'Paradise Lost.' Book II. 345.

"There is a place
(If ancient and prophetic fame in heaven
Err not), another world, the happy seat
Of some new race called Man."

And in both poets the lines succeeding the above suggest the possibility of wounding the Creator through His new creation.

There are points of difference as well as of resemblance in the two accounts of the temptation and fall of our first parents. The earlier poet has Satan bound fast in hell in heavy chains, and it is an agent he sends to work the ruin of Adam and Eve. The system of attack too is different. The fiend tells Adam that he is sent from God to bid him learn many things, and therefore he must eat of the tree. But Adam is firm and cannot be overcome. Filled with wrath, he turns to Eve and succeeds with her. After great persuasions Eve prevails upon Adam likewise to eat, who seems to be convinced, and not, as in Milton, overcome by his love for Eve. When they come to themselves their grief is great—"Sometimes to prayer they fell."

A final remark we add respecting the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We read, Genesis iii. 6, that it was a delight to the eyes, and Milton says it was so fair that to behold might tempt alone. Yet the Anglo-Saxon paraphrase has it "altogether swart, dim and dark."¹ It is not likely that Cædmon so described it; it is more probable that in its transmission from one age to another, and from one dialect to another, the poem suffered.

¹ See page 6.

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